

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Whole No. 476

Hybrids, Oddities and Freaks

By Denis R. Rogers

(Conclusion)



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 149

DE WITT'S TEN CENT ROMANCES

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Hybrids, Oddities and Freaks

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(Conclusion)

8. A most interesting oddity in my collection is a copy of "Adrift in the Wilds" by Edward S. Ellis, the text of which bears the imprint of A. L. Burt and which has a paper wrapper identical to that of Burt's Boys' Home Library, except that the name Burt does not appear on the wrapper at all. The front cover bears the legend: Boys' Library of Adventure and Romance by Famous Authors : and the back of the wrapper gives the publisher as Perry Mason & Co., Publishers Youths Companion, 41, Temple Place, Boston, Mass. The back wrapper also contains the statement that the series is published on the first of each month—no year is stated—price 30 cents per copy and lists fourteen tales, of which five are by Horatio Alger Jr., two by Edward S. Ellis and one each by Harry Prentice, Randolph Hill, James Otis, James Franklin Fitts and Alfred R. Calhoun.

It seems evident that there was a business deal whereby A. L. Burt texts were specially wrapped for sale by Perry Mason, but what is not clear is whether or not Burt's Boys' Home Library and Perry Mason's Boys' Library of Adventure and Romance were on sale simultaneously. This may have been an arrangement whereby Burt disposed of remainder stocks, although I think that unlikely seeing that Burt used the plates of the paperback Boys' Home Library for the hardback editions which followed it.

9. The final oddity, which space permits me to mention, is a hybrid edition of "The Land of Mystery" by Edward S. Ellis, with a David McKay cover linked to a Street & Smith remainder text. The peculiarity about this hybrid is the David McKay cover.

When Street & Smith finally retired from the cloth book publishing field by selling "The Boys' Own Library" to David McKay three titles, for some unfathomable reason, appear to have been left out of the deal, namely "Golden Rock" and "The Land of Mystery" by Edward S. Ellis and "With Boer and Britisher" by William Murray Graydon.

The evidence is that the Graydon yarn was allowed to go out of print, possibly because the story was no longer topical in February 1906. The other two stories were published thereafter by Hurst & Company of New York, but why Street & Smith withheld the publication rights in two Ellis titles from the sale of "The Boys' Own Library" to David McKay, whilst allowing the rights in the other Ellis tales in the Library to pass to the Philadelphia publisher, is baffling.

The hybrid edition referred to above indicates that Street & Smith remainder texts of "The Land of Mystery" found their way to David McKay, were cased by that firm and then sold, but the absence of the title from any advertisement or catalogue of David McKay creates an obvious inference of a mistake.

The origin of most freaks can be attributed to carelessness, the most ex-

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assembling being the misbound book. The majority of the books of interest to us were printed on sheets which, when machine folded and cut, made up sixteen pages, sewn together into eight double page sections. It was common practice to identify the different sections by a binder's guide reference at the foot of the first of the sixteen pages.

In a beautifully clean and bright copy of "The Mountain Star" by Edward S. Ellis (Cassell & Company Limited, London) in my possession, which was published about 1910, pages 185 to 200 are missing and pages 201 to 216 have been duplicated. In this case the binders bound in two sections, reference 14, in error for one section, reference 14, and one section, reference 13.

Of course such freaks are defective books, no matter how good the condition and so of value only to a specialist.

The most interesting misbindings are those where the cover of one tale has been linked with the text of another by accident. Two such misfits have come into my hands in the course of my Ellis research, but I am sure that errors of this type were not suffered by only one author: anyway here are the details of the two Ellis misfits:

1. A copy of "Brave Tom" bound up in the cover of "Righting the Wrong." Both text and casing bear the imprint of The Merriam Company. Correctly bound Merriam editions of both "Brave Tom" and "Righting the Wrong" have also been found.
2. A copy of "The Flying Boys to the Rescue" bound up in the cover of "The Boy Patrol around the Council Fire." The John C. Winston Company was the publisher in this instance.

Additionally I have been told of a hybrid freak, namely a Price-McGill Company remainder text of "Through Apache Land" bound up in a Merriam cover of "The Cave in the Mountain." Of course The Merriam Company of New York were the successors to The Price-McGill Company of St. Paul. Price-McGill issued the first two volumes of The War Whoop Series ("Through Apache Land" was No. 2) and Merriam completed the series by adding two more volumes ("The Cave in the Mountain" was No. 4). All in all The Merriam Company seems to have employed some careless binders.

Cheap book publishers, such as Donohue, were not at all particular about the appropriateness of the illustrations to the text. In contrast there were tales, usually short stories rather than full length books, written round illustrations, which the publisher had bought cheaply. For the purpose of this article, however, I am referring to illustration misfits due to unintentional misbindings. The re-issue of Ellis tales by The John C. Winston Company of Philadelphia during the 1920s produced a number of illustration misfits, of which the following is an example:

A copy of "The Launch Boys' Cruise in the Deerfoot," on the title page of which it is recorded that the book is illustrated by Burton Donnel Hughes, has as its only illustration a frontispiece, initialled EJP, with the caption, "The scow caught the breeze." That plate was one of the illustrations provided by Edwin J. Prittie for "Captain of the Camp."

A spectacular misprint occurred in The Wide-Awake Boys Series edition of "The Stockton Boys Adventures." James Otis appears as author on the front cover, on the spine and in the copyright data on the verso of the title page, but the title page itself reads: The Stockton Boys Adventures; or, Wan Lun and Dandy by Edward S. Ellis, author of "Hunting in Africa," "Trapping in the Tropics," "Adventures in Mexico," "The Cruise of the Sprite," etc. Of course James Otis Kaler was the real author not only of "The Stockton Boys Adventures," but also of the other four tales credited to Ellis on the title page.

Another striking misprint in my possession is a copy of "Lost in the

Rockies" (A. L. Burt, New York), with an absolutely plain front cover. The spine is that of the original Burt format and so it appears that the casing of this volume escaped die stamping on the front cover.

It is surprising that such a defective casing should have got past the binder, the despatcher and the bookseller. One would have expected Burt to have withdrawn such a freak at some stage before it left the book factory and for the bookseller to have refused to accept it. Of course the bookseller may have obtained a price reduction in lieu of returning the book for credit and then have sold it at a reduced price or even have given it away to some deserving youngster of his acquaintance. Perhaps I should make it clear that there is no evidence to suggest that the front cover could be a replacement and not the original casing.

All I need say in conclusion is that, if you discover a purchase is a hybrid, an oddity or even a freak, there may be no need for sulphurous imprecations. Such unusual volumes enhance a book collection and so should not be discarded lightly as valueless.

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NOTE

In a story published in the March issue of Redbook entitled The Baby Sitters, by Ethel Delston, a baby sitter by the name of Flossie finds a treasure house of 37 Algers in the home she is sitting and makes sure to keep the job until all 37 are read. (Thanks to my wife who reads Redbook and other ladies' magazines diligently.)

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